

SECTION 5

STORAGE AND HANDLING

USDA FOOD PRODUCT LIABILITY

When physical delivery of USDA food product is taken, the RA assumes responsibility for the safekeeping of product. The RA also assumes liability for the value of the food products should a loss occur due to theft or negligence in storage and/or handling. Although food products are provided without cost by USDA, there is a value assigned to each product including USDA's cost of purchasing, processing and distribution of the food products to states. For current food product values and other product information, refer to the allocation spreadsheet. In order to guarantee its quality and safety, each RA and its Outlets are responsible for the proper storage and handling of USDA food products. Premature deterioration of food products is often the result of improper storage conditions and practices. Every effort must be made to reduce loss due to spoilage, pest infestation and theft by following accepted warehousing methods. This action not only ensures quality products being distributed but also protects the RA from claims action by the State of Indiana or USDA to recover the value of the spoiled or lost product.

Contact TEFAP Staff for procedures of replacement.

RAs and Outlets will not be held liable for product quality except in cases of negligence on their part. RAs and Outlets will be held liable if they knowingly distribute food products that are spoiled, especially if the spoilage occurred because of negligence on their part.

GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF FOOD STORAGE

Food storage areas should provide protection from weather, fire, theft and pests. Aisles between pallets should be wide enough to provide easy access for inspection, inventory and pulling of product. All USDA food products are to be stored at the RA or at a storage facility contracted by the RA. RAs and their Outlets must follow good warehouse and storage practices (Refer to Warehousing Standards. Exhibit Q). Those practices include, but are not limited to:

- ◆ keeping all food 6" off floor, store on pallets, platforms or shelves.
- ◆ keeping all food 4" away from walls. This will allow for good air circulation and pest control.

- ◆ keeping all non-food items separate from food. Toxic items (soap, bleach, cleaning supplies, etc) must be kept away from food items
- ◆ keeping floors, pallets and shelving clean
- ◆ keeping doors, windows, and roofs well sealed to prevent pest entry and water damage
- ◆ maintaining proper temperatures
- ◆ maintaining a good pest control system
- ◆ qualified person on staff or contract with a licensed firm to handle pest control management
- ◆ maintain equipment; regularly check for leaky compressors in freezer and refrigeration units; hydraulic forklift leaks; etc.
- ◆ thermometers must be kept in all freezer and refrigeration units, and dry storage areas
- ◆ maintain temperature logs of each area
- ◆ RAs must assure that all outlets have thermometers in place and that freezer and refrigeration units are operative

STORING DRY FOOD PRODUCTS

Dry food products must be stored:

- ◆ in a cool (50° - 70° F) place
- ◆ away from direct sunlight
- ◆ minimum of 6 inches off the floor
- ◆ at least 4 inches away from walls
- ◆ with a two-foot ceiling clearance to avoid high temperatures at ceiling
- ◆ storage area must be clean, secure and inspected regularly

STORING REFRIGERATED AND FROZEN FOOD PRODUCTS

Food products requiring refrigeration must:

- ◆ be kept at temperatures of 35° F to 40° F
- ◆ be stored to allow for proper air circulation
- ◆ be stored in a refrigeration
- ◆ unit that is clean and inspected on a regular basis.

Frozen food products must:

- ◆ be stored in freezer that can maintain a temperature at 0° F or below
- ◆ be stored allowing for proper air circulation
- ◆ be stored in a freezer unit that is cleaned and inspected on a regular basis

FOOD BANK STORAGE GUIDELINES FOR STACKING FOOD PRODUCTS

The basic rules for stacking food products are:

- ◆ limit the height of the stack so cases of food on the bottom layers will not be crushed; cross-stack cases on pallets to ensure the stack will be sturdy and solid and will not tip when being moved
- ◆ shrink wrapping provides added stability
- ◆ stack cases away from potential damage by heat, steam or water

MAINTENANCE OF STORAGE AREA

- ◆ An ongoing system of pest control is required. Rodent controls such as traps and glue boards are recommended. Place traps along walls and near doorways, moving the traps monthly.
- ◆ Poisons must not be used except by a licensed professional. Prevent rodent infestation by thorough cleaning and maintenance of the warehouse.
- ◆ Ensure there is a cleaning schedule established listing the necessary frequency of cleaning for each location. Floors, including under pallets, should be swept and cleaned at least monthly. Floors in high traffic areas require regular cleaning. Area soiled by spillage or breakage must be cleaned immediately. Broken pallets should be discarded and dirty pallets cleaned.
- ◆ Empty pallets should be stored apart from food products.
- ◆ Maintenance of the exterior of the warehouse must not be overlooked. The building and grounds should be inspected regularly for signs of fire hazard, pest infestation, security problems and needed repairs. Garbage, waste or rubbish must be disposed of frequently and not allowed to become nesting areas for pests.

ROTATION OF STOCK

To help assure the quality and freshness of USDA food products, the practice of First In/ First Out (FIFO) must be followed. Food must be stored so cases with the oldest pack dates are used first. All USDA food products have the pack date on the cases. Pack dates or lot numbers are also printed, stamped or embossed on individual cans or containers. HCSS staff will routinely assess inventory levels to assure that supplies are reasonable and appropriate for distribution activities

RAs and their storage facilities must maintain a running inventory of all USDA food products. It is also important to keep an inventory for all other items in storage.

DAMAGED AND/OR OUT OF CONDITION PRODUCT

Out-of-condition products are those food products, which appear to have come from the packer contaminated, deteriorated, spoiled, infested or having latent defects. All food products must be inspected upon receipt. Bulging cans or cans with sharp dents and rust on the seams are examples of out-of-condition products. **SHOULD FOREIGN MATTER SUCH AS GLASS OR METAL BE FOUND IN A PRODUCT, THE SITUATION SHOULD BE TREATED AS AN EMERGENCY. HCSS TEFAP STAFF SHOULD BE CALLED IMMEDIATELY FOR PROCEDURES.**

All out-of-condition losses must be reported to HCSS Commodity Staff by phone immediately. The information required is:

- ◆ Recipient Agency Name
- ◆ Recipient Agency Address
- ◆ USDA Product Received
- ◆ Contact Person
- ◆ Title
- ◆ Phone
- ◆ Date Complaint Filed
- ◆ Commodity Name (Short Title)
- ◆ Description of Problem/Complaint
- ◆ Reason for Complaint
- ◆ Contract Number, Delivery Order, N/D Number
- ◆ Lot #, Box #, Can Code #, Pack Date, Ship Date
- ◆ Date Product Received, Amount Received, Amount on Hold,
- ◆ Vendor (if known)
- ◆ Is Product Under Warranty – Yes - No

This information should be completed on the Commodity Discrepancy Report (Exhibit F) and the Complaint Worksheet (See Exhibit G). As much information as possible concerning the product should be gathered. Do not dispose of any out of condition food products until advised to do so by HCSS. In some instances, USDA will require samples of the out-of-condition product. When conditions present a health hazard to food stored nearby, (exploding cans, infestation of grain products, etc,) the out-of-condition product must be isolated.

For additional information about warehousing food, contact your county or local health department.

Housing and Community Services Section Staff will notify each RA (Recipient Agency) within 24 hours via email after receiving a FOOD SAFETY ALERT. You must respond by email to this office that the notification was relayed to your individual food outlets.

If an RA has any questions regarding the correct procedures to follow, contact Marsha McGraw, TEFAP Specialist or Dennis DeBruhl, TEFAP Clerk at 1.800.341.3614, extension 6997 or 317.232.6997 or 317.232.1087 or email Marsha: mmcgraw@fssa.state.in.us or Dennis: ddebruhl@fssa.state.in.us

REPACKAGING PROHIBITED

USDA food products may not be repackaged unless specific instructions to the contrary are issued by HCSS.

Non USDA food products should not be repackaged in a food pantry. If non USDA food products are entirely too large for any size family, it is suggested that it be repackaged under the specifications of the local or state Board of Health. The Board of Health must certify pantries to repack any type of food. Meat should be repackaged at the local grocery store or the local meat processing plant. This should only be done on a case by case situation and be **very limited**.